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## A PROFANE VIEW OF THE SANCTUM.

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My day's work was done. I try to be one of that very small class of men who are wise enough to leave "shop" at the shop when they go home for the night, in order that, after mental excursions in other directions, they may come back to it with fresh vigor the next morning. So, when fortunate enough to have an evening all to myself, I sit in my easy-chair, with my newspaper in my lap, smoke a cigar — "to the glory of God," of course, like Mr. Spurgeon — and dream. I reconstruct the history of the olden times; and then, in the light of present tendencies, I forecast the possible future. Thus I picture the reforms that might be, and think out at length what other people ought to do in order to create an ideal world. I suppose no one ever yet objected to an ideal world, provided other people would bring it about; for, in each man's ideal world, he himself is the center, and he always has everything he wishes. The only trouble about creating it is the fact that it requires present labor and sacrifice, and the aforesaid other people are not unselfish enough to undergo them on our behalf.

Among the things I have always wanted in my ideal world — when it comes — is an ideal newspaper. I have long objected somewhat seriously to the real newspaper of the real world. I think that I have always appreciated, quite as fully as anybody, the wonder and glory of its past achievement and its present position and power. And yet I have never been quite satisfied that it had, as at present conducted, earned the right to supersede the school and the church — all the old educational, moral, and religious institutions — as some of its more enthusiastic advocates have modestly hinted. I may as well here frankly acknowledge, for it is sure to come out incidentally if I do not, that my editorial experience is somewhat limited. It consists chiefly in the fact that I have read editorials frequently, have had a more or less inti-

mate personal acquaintance with a good many editors, and have sometimes been obliged to note the limitations of the editorial mind as revealed by their dissent from my opinion as to the value of certain articles, both in prose and verse, which I have offered for publication. But this limited experience has not at all shaken my confidence in my editorial theories. It may even have had the opposite effect, and I am all the more comfortable in my opinion when I reflect that majorities rule in a democratic country, and that I am quite sure I shall have the majority on my side. Let me illustrate this point a little, and see how the same principle works in other directions.

If any one imagines that my lack of experience, or even knowledge on the subject, diminishes the value or validity of my opinions as to the editorial function, I can easily silence him by pointing to a few facts. For example, I suppose it is an unquestioned fact that nobody knows so little about preaching as the minister. If in these times when everybody is discussing the question as to why people do not go to church—though, curiously enough, the churches are increasing in number all the time—a minister should be so fortunate as to have a thousand hearers, he knows perfectly well that at least a thousand people know better how to preach than he does. If he does not know this, he must be a dull man, even for a minister. One person knows that his sermons are too long, though the whole service be no more than an hour and a half. Another knows that he ought, or else ought not, to preach without notes; still another, that he ought, or else ought not, to let politics alone in the pulpit. Somebody else is aware that he furnishes too little of the sincere milk of the word, or else that he does not deal enough with the secular topics of the day. It is common talk that he is too aristocratic, or else is not high-toned enough; that he does not sympathize enough with the young, and so make himself a successful rival of the skating-rinks; or, perhaps, that he is not grave enough to suit the old, who have outgrown their youthful follies. It is not at all necessary that a man should ever have preached, in order to be abundantly qualified to tell a minister what he ought to be and do to satisfy a thousand contradictory tastes and opinions. It will even be found generally true that a person who does not go to church at all is wiser in this matter than anybody else.

This point might be further illustrated by noticing the wisdom

of unmarried people in the matter of training children. Having received a good deal of advice on this subject from unprejudiced old bachelors and old maids, I have learned thoroughly to appreciate its worth. And the same is true in business matters generally. What man ever yet failed, after a brave fight with circumstances that he could not control, that he did not find a host of friends about him ready most cordially to acknowledge that he had made a fool of himself, and that, if he had taken their layman's advice, in a matter in which they had had no experience, everything might have been all right? So I think it must be plain, to every thoughtful person, that my ability to tell how a newspaper ought to be edited, is presumably beyond question.

The always wise Mr. Hosea Biglow, in his last deliverance to the public, says, referring to the fact that he had never been in Congress :

“I hain’t no chance to speak  
So’s’t all the country dreads me onct a week,  
But I’ve consid’ble of that sort o’ head  
That sets to home an’ thinks wut *might* be said.”

So, though I have never edited a newspaper, I have had the audacity to do a good deal of thinking as to how one might be edited. And, after all, I suppose all candid men will admit that a man need not be a French cook in order to have a well-grounded opinion that his soup is not improved by finding a fly in it.

I sat, then, one evening in my easy-chair, with my feet elevated at the angle that every one of my gentleman readers will appreciate, looking across the paper lying in my lap at the glowing coals in my open grate, and seeing in the fire the growing outlines of the newspaper that is to be. At first, my thoughts wandered over the past and the present, and noted the really wondrous and grand things that the newspaper has become and is doing to-day. Four things I chiefly thought of, and it is only fair that I do them full justice, by way of suggestion at least, before I proceed to those things for the mention of which the whole editorial fraternity will think my presumption exceeds all bounds.

In the first place, as I glance over my paper, I think of the scattered tribes of long ago. Then, of the isolated peoples, each one, like China to-day, fancying itself the center of the earth; shut in with its own petty egotism, and with no means of communication with the rest of mankind. Then, I see the

courier on horseback, on a laborious and dangerous journey, taking some message over a slow and little-traveled route. Picture after picture, phase after phase, of industrial development passes by my mental vision, until at last I see the seas turned into ferry-ways, and the continents into net-works of rail and wire. The earth has become a vast whispering-gallery. And the paper in my lap has caught up and stereotyped all that the great world said and did yesterday, and thus has tossed the globe upon my breakfast-table. Two or three cents now bring more information to every door than even the learned of mankind could know a hundred years ago. Wisdom is a gift of nature, and is not to be found even in books. But to-day even the poorest man may be intelligent if he will. If he cannot be well educated, he can at least be "well smattered," which Gail Hamilton says is the next best thing. And this marvel the newspaper has wrought.

In its accomplishment of this work the newspaper has done something grander still, of which perhaps neither editors nor others have taken sufficient account. Not even all the preachers have done so much as the newspapers in developing a practical sense of human brotherhood, and so helping on that kingdom of man which is the real kingdom of God. Isolation means misconception, and, as a consequence, enmity. If he is a foreigner, fling a stone at him,—that is the old impulse born of supposed self-interest. Now no sensible man wishes even a foreign war, for he has learned the community of human interests. And nothing has done so much to spread this knowledge as the newspapers. They are helping "Peace on earth, good-will to man," more than all the Christmas sermons.

Another noble service of the newspaper is that of creating an arena for free debate on all debatable subjects in heaven and on earth. It constitutes a universal town-meeting for politics, a more than royal society for science, a real œcumenical council for religion. Any one paper may be ever so narrow, ever so much of an "organ," but it cannot prevent some man's starting another paper across the way, and it cannot hinder the people's reading both of them. So, first or last, all subjects have a chance for free and unbiassed discussion. And from such a discussion the truth has everything to hope, and error everything to fear. Heretofore, timid opinions have had abundant opportunities for shunning the direct rays of investigation. But the day of universal reading has

dawned. Universal thinking will follow. Then woe to that which is afraid of thought! All this was impossible a hundred years ago, or in any age preceding that. But now it advances in a geometrical progression. More than all other agencies, the newspaper is doing this. Henceforth, if any man holds a pet opinion, of the truth of which he is not quite sure, and yet that he is specially anxious to keep, let him make certain that the receptacle he treasures it in is light-proof. The atmosphere of the coming age will not be favorable to the preservation of perishable fruits, whether in politics, science, or religion.

One other office the newspaper fills, that of public conscience and detective. The collective newspapers of the world form a sort of world-brain, through which mankind comes to a consciousness of itself. And in this mirror of world-consciousness, it sees and passes judgment on world-actions. Never before were the nations so amenable to the common conscience of mankind. No secrets can long be kept. "There is nothing covered that shall not be made known." To-day there is no nation so mighty but it fears to be brought before the bar of public opinion. Wars are no longer undertaken lightly. Their methods are become more human, and the weakest and most struggling people knows it has an advocate in the universal sense of right, of which even the most conscienceless despot is afraid. American opinion influences the course of a war in China. And Russian diplomats must reckon with the tone of the German press. So hastens on "the parliament of man, the federation of the world." Without the newspaper to bring public opinion to bear, and to serve as the medium for the public conscience, the old isolation would return again, and all this would be impossible. In a similar though less important way, the newspaper serves as a detective in individual cases. The time is rapidly approaching when there will be no last corner left on earth in which a criminal can securely hide. Even now, there are few places where he is not in danger of reading a description of himself in the first paper he picks up, as he looks for the time of departure of the next train.

All these things in favor of the newspaper flitted through my mind as I sat musing and looking into the grate. And I said to myself: "If an editor is not particularly hard-hearted, how can he possibly be angry with a critic that begins to find fault only after making such grand concessions?" And I have not written

all this down, as Lowell says, to "git the good-will of the orjunce." I have done it because it is just. And if I criticise, it is only as one might criticise a picture that was being finished by a favorite artist, for the sake of having it as nearly perfect as possible. For it does seem a pity that so grand a possibility should be marred by such grave defects. Let us then proceed to note what some of these defects are.

Suppose we make a visit to the editorial rooms of the "National Palladium." This is one of a vast number of papers, each of which has the largest circulation, the largest advertising patronage, the largest number of foreign correspondents, the largest corps of home reporters, and the largest everything in general in the whole country. The first thing that attracts attention is the sort of mystic authority and air of supernal wisdom that seems to enshroud, and, at the same time, illumine all editorial utterances. The dogma of the church's infallibility is fast passing out of the belief of all intelligent readers of the newspapers; but I sometimes find myself wondering as to whether editorial infallibility aspires to be the new prophet and wear the old mantle. For now and then some editor, in a confidential mood, will let drop the opinion that the newspapers are already doing more good than all the churches, and will hint his expectation that the press is gradually to supersede most of the religious and educational institutions of the world. Upon careful inquiry you will find that this editor is by no means distinguished for either education, piety, or morality. But one suspects that this kind of writer is taking on something of the priestly function, and that the editorial virtue is supposed to reside in the office, whatever the man may be. Two or three slight indications of the "Palladium's" mystic wisdom it is worth while to notice a little in detail.

In the first place, however insignificant—physically, mentally, or morally—a writer may be, he swells to the proportions of a majestic "we" when he "wields" the editorial pen. And, by the way, I believe that nobody but newspaper writers ever "wield" a pen nowadays. When in the presence of this "we," I always think of the plural *Elohim*—"gods," translated "God"—in the first chapter of Genesis; and of how the commentators get over the polytheistic implication by declaring it to be similar to this editorial usage. Here again is a curious suggestion of a higher than individual authority, that hints a parallelism between the sanctum

and the sanctuary. I am aware that this usage was once supposed to be a modest device to avoid the repetition of the egotistic *I*. But, nevertheless, the effect is the opposite of modest. And, after all, why should it not be made apparent that any particular newspaper utterance is only the opinion of some one not very uncommon individual, and not the outpouring of some collective fountain of wisdom, having a source higher than the ordinary human level?

In the next place, even if religious authority is declining, superstitious authority has not altogether died out. Many people appear to have an extraordinary veneration for the printed alphabet, though they treat the very same letters, spoken or written, with supercilious contempt. For instance, John Smith, on the street, may be held in no very high esteem. His opinions are simply those of John Smith, and every one feels at liberty to disregard or contradict what he may say by word of mouth or in private correspondence. But, besides being a general Bohemian about town, engaged in all sorts of haphazard occupations for a living, he has the *entrée* of several newspaper sanctums, and now and then appears anonymously in the editorial columns. On these occasions, although he utters the same trite or nonsensical things that are disregarded on the street, he becomes surrounded with the superstitious halo that seems to envelop the whole mystery of the printing-press. He speaks out of the clouds; and people read, ponder, and even think it worth while to reply to him.

Another sign of infallibility is, that no editor is ever known, under any circumstances whatever, to confess ignorance on any subject, or to admit that he has ever been in the wrong. To do so seems to be regarded as a sort of infidelity to the press. The people look to it for light and guidance; and light and guidance they shall have. Though any particular editorial writer has not mastered any one field of research, still it is his office, as an editor, to be equally at home in all fields. And if some member of the opposition proves him to be palpably and grossly ignorant, several resources are always open to him. It may be too hard work to study up the subject; but he can always rely on the partisan bias of most of his readers, and also on their being as ignorant as himself. So, if a still stronger assertion of his position is not enough, he can always accuse his opponent of being bribed to undermine the prosperity of the laboring classes; or, perhaps, in-



sinuate something concerning the moral character of his grandfather. It not infrequently happens that an editor makes some false or injurious statement about the personal character or business relations of a citizen ; but his infallibility will rarely allow him to apologize. He may possibly admit that some new employé in the office has been mistaken ; or, more boldly, he may allege that appearances fairly justify the inference drawn. In any case, he can always have the last word. And, in the end, individuals find it more prudent to sit down quietly, even under the grossest injury, than to attempt to secure justice in a case where the opposing counsel is at the same time jury and judge and executioner.

There is one development of journalism concerning which the people are not over thoughtful, and into which the newspapers themselves should put a little more conscience and care. The great body of correspondents at the national capital have come to wield almost a despotic power. Each day they hold in their hands the distribution of political news for the whole country. The interests of the country demand that a work like this be done in a spirit of judicial fairness, especially when dealing with the "other party." There should be also a sense of proportion, a comprehension of the relative importance of news. But too often the correspondents of the "Palladium" are not so anxious to furnish a fair and balanced account of what has really taken place as they are to "make a point" against the Administration, or in favor of "our paper." And not infrequently it comes to pass that a news-gatherer takes rank, not according to the accuracy of his reports, or because of sending home such news as is most important, or that the Government wishes to have known, but is rated high if he gets something for his paper that none of the others get, or if he can be two hours ahead of any other paper. And he is sometimes regarded as particularly "smart" if he can scent out some government secret, and publish it before the authorities want it known. No matter what the effect of this may be ; it is at least "enterprising," and if it turns out not to be true, no matter. The issue that contradicts and explains affairs will sell as many copies as that containing the original statement. So, whatever else happens, papers are sold and the circulation increased. And as a paper is great by as much as it sells, the grand end of journalism is accomplished. Owing to this unique power, and to the fact that all news from the capital must go through them, it naturally follows that the corre-

spondents can practically make or unmake any public man's reputation. A man can be returned by his constituents only on the strength of his reputation. And as these makers of reputation are somewhat lofty in their estimation of themselves, and naturally work for a consideration, of course most public men—all but the very strongest—will be their very humble servants. The one that is polite and deferential to them, the one that flatters their power, the one that uses his position to help them in getting the latest news, lawful or unlawful, he will be their favorite. In all their reports, he and his family will be handsome, he will be eloquent, he will be wise. While if anybody pursues an independent course, or if, for any reason, they do not like him, they can either bury him under a fatal silence, or "write him down." It is not strange, then, if the newspaper correspondent comes to regard himself as "a bigger man than"—almost anybody else.

Hence it is that the "great" man of one year sinks out of sight the next, and is never heard of afterward. The newspaper made him. He lived and moved and had his being in "puffs." And when the puffs cease he vanishes. It is vastly amusing to see how ordinary dresses become "elegant," how plain ladies become "distingué," and dull ones grow "brilliant," at a congressman's reception, when Jenkins is invited and given a prominent place.

Then the "Palladium" always goes on the assumption that what the average newspaper reader wants is peppery gossip. The scent is particularly keen for a juicy morsel that smacks of the innermost privacy of some prominent man or woman. If the great public would only stop and look at itself as the newspaper sees it, the portrait would not be specially flattering. Its style of catering does not imply a very delicate sense of either smell or taste on the part of those it is supposed to feed. I picked up a daily only a day or two ago, and nearly half of its headings on the first page were either of such a nature, or were treated in such a way, as to suggest the "Police Gazette."

It is not altogether uplifting to note how the recent illness of our great war leader and ex-chief magistrate has been dished up for public consumption. We have had spread before us the most curious, not to say repulsive, details. Of course the country has been anxious to know his real condition from hour to hour. But not only have the papers published nauseous descriptions of all the happenings of the sick-room, accompanied by ghastly illustrations

of him in all sorts of attitudes, they have even gone so far as to publish all his private, personal habits, as to neatness or the lack of it, capping the whole business with a minute description of the state of his teeth, the accumulations of tartar upon them, and his neglect of the tooth-brush. And if the worshipers of Emerson were shocked to have the unsympathetic public informed of the commonplace fact that their "god" actually liked pie, what shall one say of having a great hero laid out for this sort of vulgar dissection? And when a rumor gets abroad concerning the domestic infelicity of any well-known man or woman, the privacy of his home, as well as those of all his friends, is liable to be fairly besieged by an army of reporters. They will sometimes openly demand all the particulars, under the threat that, if their request (?) be not complied with, they will be obliged to publish what they believe to be the facts. And it is often hinted that perhaps the real facts would look better in print than the version already in their possession. It never seems to occur to them that it is none of their business, anyway. And the sturdy old British saying that "An Englishman's house is his castle" seems to be regarded as a relic of the "effete despotisms" of the old world that has no place in a free and glorious republic like ours.

To that phase of newspaper development which is represented by the work of the reporter it is difficult to do any sort of justice, either in portraying its goodness or its badness. One is tempted to extravagance both in praising and cursing. Of course no fault is to be found with the thing itself; for reporting is the newspaper's breath of life. Without the reporter we may have essays and editorials, but no *newspaper*. And it is the reporter, home or foreign, that furnishes the editor with his themes. When one considers the patience, the persistence, the fertility of resources, the tireless devotion rising even to heroism, of the average reporter, one's admiration is inspired almost to the pitch of writing an epic in his praise. When, on the other hand, one remembers some horrible experience, when, having fallen into the hands of the reporters, he envied Daniel in the lions' den, because the mouths of the lions were "stopped"; when he reflects that a reporter can not only be an ass, but, as Sothorn used to say, "so many kinds of an ass"; then even the mildest man begins to understand what it might mean to commit a crime, for there is murder in his heart.

In justification of this somewhat forcible language, I wish to hint at a few experiences with the "*Palladium*." This paper does not seem to select its reporters on the ground of either knowledge or judgment, but rather because they can write with sufficient rapidity, and are supposed to be enterprising. Enterprise, in a reporter, is like charity; it covers a multitude of sins. Let me give one or two illustrations of their way of doing things. As I sat one day talking over this matter with one of the editorial staff, a somewhat excited and depressed-looking clergyman came in. Said he: "Mr. Editor, your reporter has got me into what promises to be a serious difficulty." "Ah," replied the editor, "sorry for that. What is it?" Then he went on to explain. It seems that some of his soundest hearers were a little drowsy a Sunday or two before, and only waked up to what their minister had said when some one called their attention to it as reported in the "*Palladium*." The reporter had made a fairly straightforward report, but it was longer than there was convenient room for that morning. Instead of taking the trouble to condense it, they had chosen the easier course of cutting it in two in the middle. This left the minister in the position of having fully stated the position of some heretical opponent; and, as his reply was omitted, these opinions appeared as his own. So some of the more zealous of his flock had actually made a move to have him brought before the Synod. And, since it is well known that "corrections" rarely reach the people that have read the original error, our good Doctor of Divinity was in a fair way to find his orthodoxy impeached all over the land. I found it was a common practice to send one reporter to take down six or even a dozen sermons in one morning. The natural result was, that he got the introduction of one, snatches of the middle of most, and the end of the conclusion of another; and this made nonsense of them all. The ministers had got tired of protesting, and were obliged to hope that the people would not think them quite so idiotic as the papers made them out to be. And instances are not infrequent of very imaginative reporters not getting to the church at all until the whole service is over. In that case, they write out a column or so of their own, replete with arguments that the minister never thought of, and brilliant with metaphors he never heard of, and then they modestly feel that the clergyman ought to be obliged to them for making him preach a better sermon

than usual. This inventive genius frequently displays itself in elaborate reports of people that were not present at a public meeting, but had been advertised to be. Though, like the reporter himself, they were not able to be present, they find that this little incident has not interfered with their receiving most generous applause, any more than it has stood in the way of the reporter's telling what he did not know.

And when—as is sometimes popularly supposed to be the case, even with sermons—the good preacher is a little tame, the reporter will kindly volunteer to put in some startling thing he did not say, for the worthy purpose of heightening the dish's flavor to suit the reader's taste. I had a case of this sort once in my own experience. After, with consummate ability, getting every single point I had made wrong end to, the reporter's genius fairly took him off his feet. He remarked that, at the close of my sermon, I created quite a sensation (!) in the audience by a reference to Guiteau. As a matter of fact, I had never mentioned his name in the pulpit on that or any other occasion. And I have a friend whose sermon—reported by some imaginative person who, not being present, did not hear a word of it—was quoted by an English review as an illustration of the depths to which the American pulpit had fallen.

But the crowning feat of the "Palladium's" reporting is what is called the "interview." Let it be clearly understood that no fault is found with the thing itself. When properly done it may be made not only interesting, but profitable, instructive, and helpful for all concerned. It is only the "Palladium's" methods to which I take exceptions. It is supposed to be a taking thing to publish somebody's opinion on a certain subject. So a reporter calls on him. That he has no opinion on the subject, or that he wishes to keep what he has to himself, is a matter of no moment. An interview is wanted, and an interview must be forthcoming; otherwise, the reporter's reputation for enterprise is gone. The victim is suspected of holding such or such views, and he is informed that he had better speak to set himself right. Some other journal has already said so or so, and he had better correct it. No matter that the reporter does not write shorthand, and so can only take down fragmentary notes. No matter that he does not know anything about the subject, and so is sure to misinterpret anything that is said. The next day the poor man finds himself driveling on through a column or two, the most of it in quotation marks, headed by his name

and all his titles. He has been "written down an ass," and there is no help for it. And all his political antagonists will pick him up, and sneer at him, on the basis of what he did not say. I came across one poor fellow that had been rendered insane by this process. He was now actually as crazy as the reporters had made him out to be. He was really quite harmless, but he took me one side and, in a mysterious voice, assured me that if he could only once kill a reporter, he felt that he could then die happy.

Is it not true also that many of the newspapers, instead of being firm and unbiased seekers after and teachers of the truth, are rather interested advocates of some special party or cause? They are generally all fighting for some position with rewards of some kind attached to it. They therefore see only one side of any question; or, if they do see another, they seem to feel it to be a duty to suppress it. They talk chiefly of the success of their cause, and the interests of their constituents. It therefore follows that "the man of one newspaper" will be only another name for a blind and narrow-minded partisan. I find also that it does not at all necessarily follow that an editorial writer is expected to believe himself what he is trying to make his readers believe. No matter what his personal convictions may be, a man will often take a lucrative position on any paper, and advocate any set of opinions to which the paper may be committed, or which the "market" at that particular juncture seems to call for. I have heard of one very "smart" writer who, during a great moral controversy between two leading organs, by private arrangement and all unknown to the public, actually wrote the leaders on both sides. It appears therefore that, in reading an editorial, one can rarely be sure that he is getting the *bona fide* opinion of anybody. If a paper is on a paying basis as the organ of any special party or clique, a man of quite the opposite belief will sometimes take it and "run it," just as a man will "run" a cotton-mill, for the sake of the money he can make. It is somewhat difficult, therefore, to discover whether these leaders of public opinion themselves possess any opinions at all. Once on a time, when Mr. Moody was carrying on a great revival in a certain city, I happened to know of a paper that, as one of its managers expressed it, was undertaking to "do the heavy religious," in order to extend its country circulation. And it happened that hardly a single person thus engaged had any belief whatever in the work.

The "Palladium's" advertising columns, and its methods of dealing with cases of crime, are somewhat puzzling to one that attempts to reconcile them with the great moral and religious claims of the press in general. For instance, the editorials often grieve over the alleged decline of family morals, and the frequency of divorce; while, in the same issue, the reporters are left free to turn the revelations of the police and divorce courts into the juiciest kind of jest. Marital infidelities, brutal husbands, and heart-broken wives become the material for filling up the "funny" column. They seem to have improved on the beatitude, and made it read, "Blessed are they that weep, for others shall laugh." And the advertising columns, under the thinnest of all disguises — as mediums, or fortune-tellers, or personals — are full of all covert invitations to the very things over which the editors shed their regretful tears.

And when some brutal, bloody, or filthy crime is committed, it will be spread through whole columns. Diagrams lead everybody's imagination to the spot, and the most disgusting details are given in full. The editors admit that such things tend to increase the volume of crime. They denounce a class of papers that go into the business a little more frankly and fully than they do. They encourage a society for the suppression of vice. They try to put down a class of juvenile publications the effect of which is to familiarize youthful readers with crime. And still they lend their own papers to a similar business. I have been much interested in one editor's defense. The gist of it was, that the people wanted it, and for the sake of it bought large numbers of copies of the paper. I ventured to suggest that that line of defense would be equally good on behalf of the lowest grogeries, or of houses of prostitution, or of gambling dens. Another editor took up another plea. He said: "My theory of a newspaper is, that it is the history of the world for a day. And as this, alas, is not yet an expurgated world, we must take things as we find them." I ventured to reply: "The newspaper is not a complete history of a day. Were it to attempt to be, it would enter into such minute and secret details of life as would disgust everybody. It is only a question, then, as to precisely where the line is to be drawn. And I say, draw it within such limits as will make it healthy for family reading." And again I ventured a suggestion. I argued that, since such details were not necessary to the

statement of the fact of a crime, since they were no aid to the police, and were not in the interest of public morality, it followed that only one motive could lead to it—the desire to make money by any means that the public taste would endure. And this motive was equally good on behalf of any disreputable business whatever. At this point the editor's infallibility seemed to come to his rescue; for, though he did not reply, still he would not confess himself in the wrong.

And then the "Palladium," in its apparent zeal to exterminate all evil, falls into such a habit of indiscriminate abuse of public men and public measures, and of other papers, that when it needs to attack some real evil it has no language left by which it can do any sort of justice to the subject. The people have come to feel that "newspaper abuse" may only mean that its object is some great and good man who is trying to accomplish some noble end. The cry of "Stop thief!" is heard so often that no attention is paid to it; or it actually becomes a cover under the shade of which the real thief can make off with his plunder. The abuse, then, only helps the bad and does not injure the good. A clipping from a leading daily reveals a newspaper's own confession as to the attitude they maintain toward each other: "The millennium has started. Its point of departure is Philadelphia, where one paper actually admits that a contemporary has actually rendered important public services. Judging from the example of the papers of New York, it will be a long time before the millennium strikes that city."

There is one point more that seems to demand notice. On the part of business men, club men, and men of the world in general, there seems to exist a wide-spread spirit of cynical pessimism. And I am persuaded that newspaper methods have something to do with this. The fact is that never, in the whole history of the world, were there so many noble men, so many true women; when society, when governments, when all departments of human life, were in so healthy and hopeful a condition as they are to-day. What is the reason for the pessimistic opinion? Too largely, I believe, it is owing to the method that the newspapers take for reporting crimes. Ten thousand men in Cincinnati to-morrow will meet their checks and pay their honest debts, and nobody but the men to whom they are paid will know anything about it. Somebody will commit a forgery in Cincinnati to-morrow, and the next day it will be told of



in all the newspapers, in great head-lines, leaded so as to make as much display as possible ; and people will read it, and feel that everybody that has a chance is ready to commit a forgery.

It is the theory in the modern world that nothing is news that is not mean and wicked ; or that this pre-eminently is news. A million people behave themselves, but that is no news. Nobody thinks of reporting that, or saying anything about it. But if one contemptible man, any miserable tramp, anywhere in America, commits a meanness, they not only note the fact, but tell us all about it. If there is a drunken broil, a stabbing affray in South Boston or at the North End, not only have we the statement of the fact, but we are treated to a diagram as large perhaps as was devoted to the map showing the war in Egypt, telling us where the kitchen and sink were, where the coal-hole was, and everything else about the place ; just where the man stood, where he was when he fell down, where the body lay when it was discovered, how much blood there was on the floor. All these slaughter-house details must be spread through every home in the city.

To say that all this is necessary in order to report the news, is absurd. Many noble papers have proved that a better way is practicable. To say that more papers are sold this way, is probably true. But this is a confession that making money is the chief end of a newspaper, and this places it on a level with the grog-shops and the houses of ill-fame. The best are always in a minority. The van-guard on the march is always less in number than the main army. It will always "pay" to cater successfully to the crowd. When Miss Bertha Von Hillern was having her great walking-match, a certain editor said to me : "If I should publish in my next Sunday paper a new essay by Emerson, I should perhaps sell five hundred extra copies. A full report of the walking-match will sell twenty-five thousand." But if merely making money is what a newspaper is for, let it be frankly stated and understood. We shall then hear somewhat less about the great moral and religious influence of the press.

Now I would not for one moment be understood as charging that all the newspapers are open to the criticisms I have made, or that any one is liable to them all. But I do say that some newspapers are guilty in these directions ; that most of them are sometimes guilty ; and that newspaper methods in general are capable of great improvement. The newspaper leaves ought to be, and can

be, like the leaves of the wonderful tree in Revelation, "for the healing of the nations." It hurts one then to see them worm-eaten and withered.

I have taken the case of the "National Palladium," as a well-known illustration of the worst methods. Everybody has seen this paper, and knows that it is not mythical. It is because the old employés of this paper sometimes get on to the working staff of better journals that they also occasionally display its indefensible characteristics. When, by eliminating these faults, the press justifies its somewhat premature boast of being able to supersede the church, I know of one minister at least who will, without any jealousy in his heart, cheerfully exchange his pulpit for some useful position in the sanctum, where he may still continue his work for truth and man. But he is not yet ready to write to order, and for pay, either in the pulpit or out, since he still cherishes a few articles of personal property labeled "opinions."

M. J. SAVAGE.